

## Partnership fuels Idaho's future

*By Dale Dixon, Executive Director, Idaho Rural Partnership*

Close to 6,000 miles are on the odometer of the "Corn-Cob." That's what friends and colleagues affectionately call the 2007 Chevrolet Avalanche I drive throughout Idaho. The Avalanche has a bright yellow and green corncob emblazoned on each side of the truck with the words 'Flex Fuel' and 'livegreengoyellow.com' taking up any left-over space on the gloss-black



*The 2007 Ethanol Avalanche next to the Ethanol Edge 540 high performance airplane. Boise aerobatic pilot Greg Poe wows crowds around the world in the plane that runs on ethanol!*

truck. General Motors provides the Avalanche, free of charge, to the national Governors' Ethanol Coalition to promote ethanol. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality manages the vehicle and graciously allows Idaho Rural Partnership to use it for travel throughout the state. The Ethanol Avalanche – or corncob – is a great example of a private – public partnership promoting renewable fuel, and ultimately economic development for rural Idaho.

Renewable energy includes ethanol, biodiesel, methane digesters, wind, water... the list goes on. The list is important for rural Idaho! Consider 88% of Idaho's landmass is rural. Thirty-five of the 44 counties are rural. Thirty-six percent of the population lives in a rural area. We have a terrific opportunity to capitalize on our agricultural roots to help provide the United States renewable energy.

Just about every time I stop at a gas station with the Avalanche, I am able to strike up a conversation about high fuel prices, the need to make our own fuel and the flexibility of ethanol. Questions range from, "Where can I find ethanol?" to "Can my car or truck run on ethanol?" Stinker stations carry a 10% blend of ethanol throughout Idaho. The only 85% pump is on Main Street in Boise. Yes, any car, truck or small engine that runs on gasoline can run on a 10% blend of ethanol. Running a 10% blend is the best way for all of us to send the message, "We want renewable energy." I conclude every conversation with, "We'll see prices drop when we start large-scale ethanol production in Idaho."

Biodiesel is another renewable fuel taking root in Idaho. A large-scale production facility opened recently in New Plymouth. If you drive a diesel, you can fill your tank with bio-diesel and help Idaho's economy.

Idaho Rural Partnership's mission is to join diverse public and private resources in innovative collaborations to strengthen communities and improve life in rural Idaho. The ethanol Avalanche is only one example of such a partnership.

Check in on the 25 X '25 collaboration sweeping the nation (<http://www.25x25.org>). The idea is simple: Twenty five percent of U.S. energy consumption should be domestically produced by 2025. The effort is gaining momentum. Governor Jim Risch signed on and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture is leading the charge along with numerous partners from the agriculture sector.

The University of Idaho and Idaho National Laboratory are leaders in developing renewable energy technology. Both are members of Idaho Rural Partnership.

A number of other partnerships, co-ops and collaborations are joining around the notion of renewable energy and the economic development potential of Idaho being a leader in energy production. County government plays an important role in fostering these partnerships through understanding, education and creating opportunity for growth.

The next time you see the corn cob - I mean Avalanche - in your county, be sure to say hello.

Learn more about Idaho Rural Partnership at <http://irp.idaho.gov>. To learn how IRP can help your county with partnership and collaborative opportunities, call Dale Dixon at (208) 334-3131.